

## Through detailed study and public input, need for South Mountain Freeway is clear

ADOT, Federal Highway Administration file motion to dismiss lawsuits against project

PHOENIX – Rigorous analysis that included extensive public involvement, an overwhelming need for the project and a lack of viable alternatives are among the reasons a federal judge should dismiss lawsuits challenging the South Mountain Freeway, the Arizona Department of Transportation and Federal Highway Administration contend in a legal filing.

ADOT and the Federal Highway Administration are scheduled to present oral arguments on May 11 in U.S. District Court in Phoenix as a judge considers motions for summary judgment in the case.

In their motion filed April 25, the agencies note that Maricopa County voters twice approved building the South Mountain Freeway, most recently in 2004 through Proposition 400, which authorized the comprehensive, multimodal Regional Transportation Plan. They note the current and anticipated congestion on freeways and roads in one of the nation’s fastest-growing regions, especially Interstate 10 through downtown Phoenix, and how a new freeway corridor will improve how people and goods get around.

ADOT and the Federal Highway Administration completed a rigorous 13-year analysis, taking into account thousands of formal comments from community members, according to the motion. That includes developing a comprehensive Environmental Impact Statement that complies with federal law and follows best practices for transportation projects.

“The need for the South Mountain Freeway is clear, and Valley voters have realized this for more than 30 years. While there is no ‘perfect’ freeway project, ADOT and the Federal Highway Administration have worked to study the likely impacts of this project and designed ways to minimize those impacts, just as we have done for decades throughout the Valley as the freeway system was developed,” ADOT Director John Halikowski said. “You only need to travel through the Broadway Curve on I-10 during rush hour to see the problem – Phoenix today doesn’t have the highway capacity to meet traffic demand. The South Mountain Freeway will better meet today’s traffic needs, while supporting better mobility in the future.”

The 22-mile freeway, expected to open in late 2019, will provide a long-planned direct link between the East Valley and West Valley, and will complete the Loop 202 and Loop 101 systems.

In February, ADOT finalized the state’s first highway public-private partnership agreement through which the project team, Connect 202 Partners, will build the freeway at a taxpayer savings of more than \$100 million and will open it to traffic three years sooner than originally projected. The fixed \$916 million contract for design and construction makes this the largest highway project in state history. The development team will be responsible for 30 years of maintenance following the completion of the project, supporting construction with innovation and built-in cost efficiencies for the long term.

With construction scheduled to begin this summer, ADOT is conducting preliminary engineering, addressing cultural resources in the right of way, acquiring and preparing properties, and relocating utilities. ADOT received final federal clearance to move forward with the project in spring 2015.

For more information, visit [azdot.gov/SouthMountainFreeway](http://azdot.gov/SouthMountainFreeway).

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